Abstract: Terminology in counter-radicalisation literature has been the subject of much debate, most notably surrounding how radicalisation and terrorism is defined. This paper explores those terms that have not received as much attention or have not been specified to the area of counter-radicalisation. The issue of language borrowing is raised as terms from specific academic disciplines are incorporated into counter-radicalisation discourses without any adaptation. In face of the growing importance of risk and vulnerability evaluations, both risk and vulnerability are discussed with a conceptual model indicating their interrelationship. It is argued in particular that radicalisation requires universal definitions in order to facilitate multinational collaborations and international research. Therefore, new meanings for traditional terms will be explored to see if they can better reflect current understandings in the field.

Keywords: Counter-Radicalisation, Returnees, Terminology, Vulnerability, Risk
Introduction

Scientific research on counter-radicalisation has grown exponentially in the past decade. Entering the word *radicalisation* alone in Google Scholar reveals in excess of 60,000 matches for articles, reports and academic texts. Although new aspects of radicalisation and terrorism have resulted in the development of advanced prevention technologies and methods, the phenomena themselves are old issues in civil society. This is why it is surprising to see that there continues to be a lack of consensus in the use of key terms. Developing universally accepted definitions is clearly desirable not only for consistency but also to facilitate international research. The importance of multi-agency and multi-sectoral cooperation is a popular recommendation in the area of counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism, which has resulted in contributions from a diverse range of societal actors with backgrounds from criminology to psychology and from history to politics. The integration of perspectives from different academic disciplines has likely contributed to the challenge of cooperative engagement in the field of counter-radicalisation in regards to how research is conceptualised, conducted and reviewed. Diversified collaborations create further semantical obstacles as words are borrowed from other disciplines and integrated into counter-radicalisation contexts without proper reflection of their meaning within the field, which might, for instance, be either too specific or too general.

How certain terminologies are used, or not used, in the broader discussion of counter-radicalisation presents another point for consideration. The newsworthiness of terrorism and radicalisation has meant that the latest terror attacks and ongoing investigations are covered extensively by the news media and in other communications channels. Naturally, if a term lacks a universal definition in academic literature then no expectation can be had as to how aspects of terrorism and radicalisation will be portrayed in the media, not to mention the reality that not all news coverage is based on fair and accurate assessment of the facts in favour of sensationalist, misleading or biased opinion. How certain groups are labelled in the media in relation to terrorism and radicalisation carries clear political overtones with little or no consideration of the potential sway it could have on public perceptions of terrorist threats. The ethical difficulties of reporting acts of terrorism or violent incidents seem in part to be the by-product of the disagreements in scientific terminology. Avoiding describing a situation as an act of terrorism to be politically correct is one of many potential quandaries that could be retrogressive for scientific research. This paper will review certain terms encountered in counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism research with the aim of strengthening a universal understanding. Rather than looking to propose new terminology, this paper seeks to

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analyse how existing meanings could be redefined with ongoing perspectives in the field. This paper discusses how additional information might be incorporated in terminology to ensure a full and accurate representation of the phenomena. How current terminology used in counter-radicalisation could be more specific to prevention in practice will also be discussed.

The Double Meaning of Counter-Radicalisation

One of the first terms under review in this paper is counter-radicalisation, a term often used in the discourse of terrorism. Counter-radicalisation is broadly understood in this paper as being those measures that contribute to the development of norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours that are viewed positively by mainstream society. However, a number of competing definitions exist that each clarify counter-radicalisation differently. The main criticism highlighted here is that its meaning has become inexact as a result of its use by researchers and practitioners to label a wide range of counter-terrorism contexts. It is not uncommon to find counter-radicalisation being used interchangeably with other terminology such as anti-radicalisation, anti-polarisation, counter-extremism, countering violent extremism, countering violent radicalisation, and countering radicalisation to violence. What is more, these examples indicate the large number of similarly worded noun phrases, which creates the difficulty in selecting and strictly applying one term. Seen from a prevention perspective, the overlap that these terms share, such as the promotion of social competencies and interactions, adds further confusion to the mix.

Indeed, what a counter-radicalisation strategy might include differs between countries and governments. In certain cases, a country’s counter-radicalisation strategy is a holistic representation of approaches to prevent both (violent) extremism and radicalism. For example, the national security strategy of Hungary uses the phrase countering extremism and radicalisation to mean prevention activities that tackle anti-democratic attitudes and challenge the position of extremist groups. In comparison, the counter-terrorism strategy of the Netherlands typically refers to countering radicalisation to violence, placing a special emphasis upon those behaviours that are violent. The strategy proceeds by discussing how violent extremism will be addressed but under the heading of counter-radicalisation, which gives rise to a blurring between the two fields of radicalisation and extremism. The different use of keywords between the approaches demonstrates how a strategy can be explicit in what exactly it wishes to prevent, but can also be generic by using one phrase to refer to all forms of radicalisation and extremism. Another example is the Swedish counter-terrorism strategy, which gives specific reference to the prevention of radicalisation, violence extremism and terrorism. The listing of each of these social phenomenon indicates a clear distinction between the different social processes leading to terrorism and thereby an awareness that prevention activities are required for all forms of terrorism.

Numerous counter-radicalisation-related nouns are used in research and policy documents. Although there is a convergence with some terms, counter-radicalisation has been used, confusingly,

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as a heading for distinct social phenomena, which likely implies a sense of mutual exclusiveness. A body of general noun phrases of this term has developed over time as new research and projects are produced in the field of counter-radicalisation. It is quite common to come across the word counter-radicalisation as part of general noun phrases such as counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation and countering terrorism and violent radicalisation, used contextually to refer to an exhaustive list of prevention activities. The popularity of this research field and its multidisciplinary roots (from an assorted number of public and civil society stakeholders) has affected the notion of what it means to counter radicalisation. If it is believed that radicalism and extremism are interwoven in that one does not occur without the other, then little value can be gained from comparing fragmented terms. Yet, if the premise of preventing extremism is fundamentally different to preventing radicalisation then counter-radicalisation should not be interpreted to mean radicalism, extremism and those forms that are violent and non-violent. Instead, consensus is required in literature and policy that utilises these terms to describe separate concepts.

**Evaluations – A Complex Science**

A common criticism in counter-radicalisation literature is the lack of evaluations being performed on counter-radicalisation programmes and projects and on counter-radicalisation tools. In a research field saturated with theoretical assumptions, a significant area of knowledge remains unexplored in regard to evidencing what really decreases the risk of an individual becoming a terrorist or violent extremist. This is an ongoing challenge in Europe as counter-radicalisation technologies produced within EU funded-projects are not always being used by end users (and are sometimes even being rejected) because of a lack of test validity; this produces a significant waste of research time and EU financial resources. It is suggested here that the issue is not only how prevention concepts and outputs are rigorously tested, but also the lack of recognition by funding bodies on what it means to conduct an evaluation in the social sciences.

Seen from a social science perspective, evaluations are complex and resource-intensive processes. The expectation that projects and programmes should incorporate an internal evaluation therefore disregards the level of technicality involved. This is evidenced within the EU, where projects funded by main financial instruments such as Horizon 2020 and Seventh Framework (FP7) Programme, are restricted in time (typically up to three years) and funding. Herein lies a fundamental issue because the acquisition of EU funding has a notoriously low success rate. With competition so high, the small number of projects that are awarded grants are usually forced to overpromise in order to secure funding. For example, project and programme evaluations within counter-radicalisation existed either as one of many objectives of a project or not at all. To ensure the production of quality evaluations, funding agencies and research organisations are encouraged to offer proposals whose sole aim is to evaluate counter-radicalisation approaches.

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The complexity of evaluations is offered here as a potential reason for the limited amount that has been achieved so far. The general difficulties of an evaluation are the formulation of specific evaluation goals and hypotheses, the expertise required for the analysis and interpretation of evaluation data, and the choice of evaluation methodology whether by goal attainment, cost-effectiveness or end user suitability. Specific difficulties in conducting evaluations of counter-radicalisation measures are related to the collection of data. Although this can be obtained from a range of different sources, information in a counter-radicalisation context stems mainly from personal responses. For example, an evaluation on the suitability of counter-radicalisation tools would be typically based on an end user’s perceptions of and experience with the tool. Similarly, evaluating the impact of a terrorist rehabilitation programme would be measured by the observations of the therapist or by testimony from the participants. Although conducting research with end users may be relatively straightforward, gaining access to vulnerable populations, such as terrorists or violent extremists, can be considerably more difficult owing to lengthy ethical approval processes. Likewise, recruiting and managing participants for rehabilitation programmes provide similar barriers on account of the stigma surrounding individual confidentiality and privacy, access to rehabilitation programmes, and removal of environmental influences that could influence the participant.

One classical research challenge affecting data collection in evaluations is the size of the sample. The lack of quantitative research in the field of counter-radicalisation is a recurring theme and implies a clear need for large sample sizes to be used. As the theories underpinning several core research topics are often generalised in terms of radicalisation factors and processes, a similar expectation has emerged for prevention concepts and tools in order to aid in the exchange of effective methods. For this to be theoretically possible, an extremely large and representative population is required to accommodate for the high variation in populations (individual risk factors, vulnerability, environmental influences). However, as evaluations are often conducted under time and budget constraints, prevention concepts and anti-radicalisation tools are often based on a limited sample size, which raises the possibility that an evaluation of prevention concepts would produce different results if applied on different populations. Further dangers of using too small a sample when evaluating a de-radicalisation programme include claiming success when it is not known if the prevention concept would be effective in the larger population (type I error), or when a smaller sample size could lead to a poor evaluation of a prevention concept if a low success rate is determined in the test population, which could be a false judgement as the concept might prove successful if applied to a larger population (type II error).

A further challenge to the evaluation of de-radicalisation and rehabilitation programmes is the measurement of success. Questions raised here include whether an individual is able to de-radicalise successfully if released back into an environment where radicalising factors potentially exist and, if so, what criteria should be used to indicate a successful treatment. The general process of measuring success in therapy represents the monitoring of attitudes and/or behaviours of an individual over the course of their treatment to see if progress has been made towards the treatment’s goals and objectives, inherently lengthy and costly processes. This can be achieved using a mixture of self-administered questionnaires delivered at certain intervals and progress reports from the therapist.

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One measurement of success has been the use of recidivism i.e. whether an individual has resorted back to extremist attitudes and behaviours, or in serious cases, to violent acts\textsuperscript{10}. Although measuring recidivism is problematic because of its arbitrariness (a binary question with two possible answers, yes or no) and its emphasis on the actions and behaviours of the individual itself. There is also no consideration of possible changes in the individual’s environment such as new or starker influence from social, political, or cultural factors. Furthermore, if recidivism is to be measured by a previous radical or extremist attitude or behaviour resurfacing in an individual, then the question has to be raised as to how radical or extreme is defined, and how the views of the individual compare with those of the wider society and those of his or hers social background.

**Is it “Vulnerable to” or “Risk of”?**

A core element of counter-radicalisation programmes and projects is the identification and assessment of individuals and societal groups for cases of radicalisation. Numerous risk assessment tools have been designed to measure the level of radicalisation (ERG22+, IR46, and HCR-20 to name but a few) by calculating the cumulative effect of certain indicators that can raise or lower the individual’s risk of engaging in violently extreme behaviours\textsuperscript{11}. The terminology underpinning the majority of risk assessment tools concerns the word *risk*, though research on vulnerability is also gaining traction. The dominance of the word risk as a concept in counter-radicalisation literature has developed an unclear distinction that has led to both terms being used interchangeably or the use of risk to mean vulnerability and vice versa. Before going into the distinction between the two terms, the implications of their usage must first be first examined.

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Using Figure 1, risk is understood in this paper to mean an advanced state of pre-radicalisation where all the core elements needed for radicalisation to occur are present: individual vulnerability, hazard (radicalising factor), and exposure to the radicalising factor. Therefore, if an individual or population is identified as presenting a risk, one is essentially implying that all factors are observable to a varying degree. The stigma of being seen as a risk is created when other social groups are not associated with any of the aforementioned elements. If the term is misused, the consequences could lead to the alienation of individuals or a devaluation of those individuals by other social groups.

Comparatively, using the word *vulnerability* conjures up a different implication. Vulnerability is assumed here to be at the beginning of pre-radicalisation, signifying that radicalisation is unable to develop without first possessing a vulnerability to a radicalising factor. If used in an unsuitable context, the word vulnerability could downplay the assessment of a situation if a risk were in fact present. This would also radically change the type of prevention to be implemented as cases of vulnerability are typically addressed by broad programmes that strengthen life skills and resilience, whereas a more focused and individualised approach is perhaps required for individuals who present a more advanced case of pre-radicalisation.

The model shown in Figure 1 has been developed to show the proposed distinctions and relationships between the various terminologies encountered in risk and vulnerability assessments. The first term begins with arguably the most important element of counter-radicalisation, the vulnerability of a person, which can be understood as being the characteristics of an individual that increase the probability of adopting radical or extremist behaviours and attitudes. Vulnerabilities are believed to manifest as a result of undesirable life experiences, such as poor child-rearing practices, peer rejection, and delinquent behaviour, and represent similar strains as described by strain theory\(^\text{12}\).

The second term concerns the *hazard* itself (what is trying to be avoided) and signifies the types of social phenomena that are perceived as being negative by society (for example intolerance, violent extremism, or terrorism). Whereas the ultimate goal of prevention might be the elimination of a hazard, this is practically speaking impractical because of the complete control required over criminal behaviour.

The third term, *exposure*, represents the means by which a vulnerable person encounters a hazard. In counter-radicalisation literature, it is the social ties of a person, family members and the Internet that are believed to be the most influential mediums\(^\text{13}\).

The final term *risk*, unlike the previous three elements, no longer represents a human component or feature but rather a mathematical likelihood of an individual becoming a violent extremist or terrorist (the hazard). Therefore, risk can be understood as the sum value of the three core elements

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\(^{12}\) Robert Agnew, “Building on the foundation of general strain theory: Specifying the types of strain most likely to lead to crime and delinquency”, *Journal of research in crime and delinquency* 38(4) (2001).

of radicalisation (vulnerability, hazard, and exposure). It is assumed here that radicalisation can only occur when these three elements are present and the predicted risk of becoming radicalised varies based on the influence of these individual variables.

Prevention in a counter-radicalisation context usually involves addressing individual and group vulnerabilities and how individuals are exposed to the hazard\textsuperscript{14}. However, to reduce the overall level of risk would require a holistic strategy that deals with vulnerability, hazard, and exposure. For example, measures that improve democratic values and resilience might decrease an individual’s vulnerability to extremist messages, but this would only have an effect on the individuals radicalising and not on those already radicalised. In contrast, a strategic focus on de-radicalising individuals might reduce the overall number of radicals or extremists but the susceptibility to forms of deviant behaviour might remain, as individual vulnerabilities have not been addressed. Eliminating the overall risk would prove just as difficult as removing the hazard itself, which is why prevention often takes the form of two strategies: risk management and risk reduction. Efforts to manage the risk have a distinct aim of securitising measures such as identifying risk groups or ongoing monitoring to establish if the level of risk has changed\textsuperscript{15}. A fundamental part of these strategies is the use of risk assessment instruments to highlight those societal groups for preventive consideration.

As research has grown on the root causes of radicalisation, a greater appreciation of the social environment has been integrated into prevention measures with aims of improving education and societal participation\textsuperscript{16}. These risk reduction measures have the objective of addressing underlying causes, which essentially represent the vulnerabilities present in an individual that could predispose them to radical and extremist content. Vulnerabilities can be viewed as a destabilizing phenomenon manifesting in environmental pressures exerted on an individual, whether social, political, or economic. Exposure to negative social processes suggests a detrimental effect on emotions, values and behaviour and is thought to lead to a stronger affiliation to radical thoughts. As with the term risk, vulnerability also carries a certain stigmatisation as this represents a negative evaluation of one’s physical, social, and psychological norms\textsuperscript{17}. Moreover, the interpretation of vulnerability is rather broad given the sheer quantity of potential factors inducing this state\textsuperscript{18}. A scientific uncertainty exists about which factors cause an individual to become vulnerable to radical and extremist behaviour owing to the limited quantitative evidence at hand.

\textsuperscript{14} Ronald Crelinsten, “Perspectives on counterterrorism: From stovepipes to a comprehensive approach”, Perspectives on Terrorism 8(1) (2014).
\textsuperscript{18} Vicki Coppock, Mark McGovern, “‘Dangerous Minds’? Deconstructing Counter_Terrorism Discourse, Radicalisation and the ’Psychological Vulnerability’ of Muslim Children and Young People in Britain”, Children & Society 28(3) (2014).
Engaging with Stakeholders and Target Groups

The development of a prevention strategy, irrespective of whether it is characterised by counter-radicalisation, de-radicalisation, or disengagement, is based almost entirely upon the needs of the individual or the group of individuals it wishes to target. When it comes to the implementation of prevention interventions, cooperation with other organisations brings important benefits in view of an improved capacity to deliver the intervention, greater visibility, and the provision of additional technical assistance. Here, we speak of the two terms stakeholder and target group. The term stakeholder is unofficially understood in a counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation context to simply mean the organisations that are involved directly or indirectly with preventive activities. Despite it being an important concept, there is no formal definition of the term. Instead, there appears to be a general acceptance of its meaning from the area of business and management, wherein there is no coherent definition of the term stakeholder and what constitutes one. For the purpose of clarification, stakeholder, in the context of counter-radicalisation, is understood in this paper as:

An entity, in whichever form this might be, who has a formal responsibility to aid in the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism, and who has the expertise to contribute to the design and implementation of prevention activities or be ready to apply new perspectives and concepts of prevention.

Two fundamental elements can be identified from the description above. First, a stakeholder should share the common goal of preventing radicalisation and violent extremism as defined by their professional interests. This would not include organisations or individuals with a private interest in prevention but no official responsibility. The importance of selecting stakeholders based on their official function, regardless of whether it is a direct or indirect role, is to maintain professionalism and to avoid moving towards ‘stakeholder security’ where public/state actors possess an ancillary security function. There is an expectation that the stakeholder should possess specialised knowledge and undertake reasonable measures to contribute to prevention. The PREVENT Strategy of the United Kingdom provides an example of the debate surrounding stakeholder involvement because of the obligation it places on the public sector (schools, universities and medical institutions) to identify individuals who are vulnerable to or at risk of radicalisation. This has received heavy criticism from different stakeholders due to the increased workload involved, additional responsibilities that, arguably, do not fall within the remit of their core function, and new pressures of accountability should negligence and malpractice claims emerge if a breach in duty of care or a misidentification of extremist behaviour were to occur. As Summerfield points out, ordering medical practitioners

22 Derek Summerfield, “Mandating doctors to attend counter-terrorism workshops is medically unethical”, BJPsych Bulletin 40(2) (2016).
to assess the risk of radicalisation of patients would go beyond the patient’s agreement to their doctor’s visit and seriously threatens the doctor-patient relationship should information then be passed onwards. These consequences underline the importance of identifying those organisations whose duties have a preventative role in counter-radicalisation.

The second element of the term stakeholder is the capacity to influence or be influenced by current prevention activities. Stakeholder participation in a prevention strategy should represent an ongoing, two-way dialogue through which the experiences and knowledge of both a stakeholder and counter-radicalisation organisation are exchanged. Integrating the knowledge and needs of stakeholders into the design and implementation of prevention activities would maximise its potential impact due to an advanced understanding of both theory and practice. However, a balance should be sought in addressing the aims of the prevention strategy and those of the individual stakeholder. The interests of the stakeholder be imposed on a prevention strategy, nor should the stakeholder be dominated by the prevention programme or intervention; a strategic, mutually beneficial relationship should exist. A clear understanding of which stakeholder groups should be involved in counter-radicalisation activities makes for a greater impact on the counter-radicalisation strategy as stakeholders are included who can best contribute. This has been the subject of many issue and policy papers wherein recommendations are suggested regarding the importance in using different stakeholders for the differing views and expert knowledge they could bring.

The term target group has similar roots in business and management terminology and, as with stakeholder, been indiscriminately adopted into counter-radicalisation research. Importantly, target group has not been defined specifically for use in a counter-radicalisation context, which again raises the issues of misapplication and confusion as to its use. This paper defines a target group as:

*Any group of individuals to whom prevention activities are targeted and who can influence or be influenced by the prevention measure.*

The definition shares common ground with the term stakeholder. The first common factor is that a target group can be an exhaustive list of individuals. For example, an information centre on radicalisation might target families who are concerned about a relative who is radicalising, but could also target individuals who are trying to escape extremism. Frontline workers provide an example that could be classified as a target group, if they are the end user of a counter-radicalisation tool, but could also be a stakeholder if they have an official responsibility to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism and have the expertise to do so. The deciding factor is whether the group is on the receiving end of the prevention or is in the position to implement the prevention concept themselves.

Defining the objectives of a prevention strategy will enable the selection of an appropriate target group to achieve these objectives. If the strategy of a project aims to develop measures that strengthen the resilience of religious populations, the group with a special interest in being addressed by this measure could, for example, be religious leaders or institutions. Nevertheless,

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stakeholder identification should not simply target groups as this gives the appearance of a group being selected as a consumer or recipient of a prevention concept. Developing a prevention measure involves a more interactive process of gathering in-depth knowledge of an individual’s situation and needs in order to develop a tailored made solution. To achieve this work, a two-way communication process that is ongoing and monitored is needed to ensure that a concept is designed that is of value to the target group. In this sense, the term end user might be more useful as it indicates that an understanding of the user is needed in terms of their needs and desires. However, the use of the word end inaccurately visualises the target group at the end of the process once a final concept has been developed and not during its design stages. Generating an operational definition is needed to convey the understanding that engaging with the users of a prevention measure is important for building a successful prevention strategy, which ought to take place at the early stages of the design process and not just to validate a final concept.

If Returnees then Departees?

One group of individuals that has received significant attention in counter-radicalisation discourse are Foreign Terrorist Fighters, the vocabulary of which appears to be reflected inconsistently in research. The origin of the term returnees is disputable and perhaps exists either as a term in its own right or as a truncated version of Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters. However, the common use of this term is perhaps related to it being straightforward to read and impactful. For example, using Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters multiple times in a sentence would seem wordy and would not be as stylistically effective in a heading. Yet, the popular use of returnee is criticised here for sounding too trivial and for not expressing core elements of its meaning. If returnees is a generally accepted term, then why are individuals who leave their country to fight in armed conflicts abroad not called departees?

The first issue with the term returnee is the diverse nature of its interpretation. When viewed objectively, the term can be taken to imply a whole range of different groups. In the context of terrorism, this would bring together individuals who have potentially very distinct characteristics, such as those returning with real combat experiences, those who are extremists but who have not committed any terrorist acts, and family members or friends who were simply brought along. As these groups of individuals are not homogenous in their level of vulnerability to participating in terrorist activities, potentially different integration strategies are required. This level of insight is lost with the term returnee. Treating these groups as a collective is also antithetical to research efforts that distinguish between extremists, violent extremists, and terrorists. Looking closely at the composition of the term returnee, the word return is an important element of its meaning, as in those individuals returning to their country of residence after being involved in radicalism, extremism or terrorism in a destination country. Focusing on the individuals who are returning to their homeland, however, overlooks other potential groups of individuals entering a country. An example would be

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those individuals born aboard whom have become radicalised, or involved in terrorist acts, but decide to flee their country for a better life, among other reasons. Should these individuals then be classified as migrants despite possessing a higher security risk? Surely, it is irrelevant for a host country if an incoming population of violent extremists are either natural born citizens or immigrating citizens. Given the many possible migration flows, perhaps it would be more suitable to develop a more generic term that refers to arriving radicals and extremists as a migration group regardless of whether it is emigration, immigration or internal migration.

Another term encountered in literature is *Returning Foreign Fighters*. This alternative immediately appears more accurate as several key elements are referred to that gives the reader a fuller impression of the individual. However, it would be premature to choose this term without consideration of its limitations. Notably, Schmid\(^\text{25}\) highlighted the problematical nature of the word *foreign* in *foreigner fighters*, arguing that it places too much emphasis on the origin of an individual. For example, religious fighting draws its power from the unification of individuals across the globe and not by dividing its individual members by their birthplace. In this view, an individual fighting for a cause goes beyond his or her personal characteristics; a Christian fighting for a Christian cause would arguably not be foreign, nor would a Muslim fighting for an Islamic cause. Similarly, the use of the word *fighter* in foreign fighter as well as *terrorist* in *Foreign Terrorist Fighter* implies that an individual has left a country to engage in some violent act of extremism or terrorism\(^\text{26}\).

Although this is one possible motivation, there are also other explanations including the wish to further radicalise, be physically associated with terrorist groups, or to accompany a friend or family member. The specificity of the term foreign fighter and lack of specificity of the term returnee suggests a fundamental issue with how the phenomenon is defined. At the very minimum, the discrepancies between both words appears readily fixable. Viewed logically, if an individual leaving their home country for an extremist purpose is called a foreign fighter, then the term *Returning Foreign Fighter* should be used for those who return.

**Conclusion**

By looking deeper into the use of terminology in counter-radicalisation literature one is able to identify a range of terms that have been either borrowed from other academic disciplines or are defined in a way that inappropriately represents the phenomenon. The unfeasibility of agreeing on certain terms is highlighted as a repercussion of the many perspectives introduced from different practitioners, disciplines and elements of society. Although generic definitions may be an oversimplification that would potentially leave out major elements of its meaning, it is important to recognise that a term can only be defined based on the available knowledge and experience of a topic at one point in time. As knowledge is constantly evolving and time is constantly progressing, a greater concern is the continuing use of terms that no longer provide an accurate description.


\(^{26}\) Ibid.
The need for a common terminology is underlined by the need to increase multinational collaborations and universal understandings. The idea of using a heuristic approach when defining terms is supported here as a constructive solution. From a practical standpoint, it might be more viable to create a flexible and broad definition that signifies the core elements of a term as opposed to creating overly complicated definitions that attempt to cover all possible interpretations. Because processes of radicalisation leading to terrorism are complex, there is unlikely to be a definition or interpretation that is wholly complete and being overly factual in the absence of facts is an encumbrance to reaching semantic universality.
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